

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

A249.3
So39W

AD-33 Bookplate
(5-61)

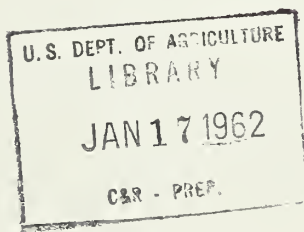
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
LIBRARY



BOOK NUMBER **A249.3**
495745 **So39W**

WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH GROUPS OF PEOPLE

Some Principles and Methods for
Soil Conservation Service Personnel



SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
June 1960



Preface

The Soil Conservation Service continues to seek ways to do a more efficient and effective job of giving technical assistance to farmers and ranchers who request such help through their soil conservation districts. Our job involves working with both individuals and groups. Over the years, we have found that we can give certain kinds of technical help more easily and that the results will be more lasting if we work with groups. We also have found that the attitude of the leader and the group greatly influences the ease and speed with which we can help the individual do his soil and water conservation job.

This booklet summarizes some of the established principles of working with people that our conservationists have found useful. It may be used as a training aid for new employees and as a reference for both new and old. It is not intended to be a complete discussion of sociological and psychological principles. It touches only on those that relate to our work in the Soil Conservation Service. It does not establish any new procedures. Its only purpose is to help SCS people do a better job.

The older employee will find many familiar facts in the following pages. The newer employee may find not only some familiar ones that he can use in a new way but also some new ones. Both will find they have been using many of the principles, either consciously or unconsciously.

Working with groups and their leaders is not a program. It is a tool we can use in carrying out our program. It is not new. The principles are proven. For many years it has been SCS policy to use this method wherever it is effective--where it will help speed up and make easier our job of helping more people apply the science of soil and water conservation.

Contents

	Page
People are naturally interdependent	1
Natural groups	1
Manmade groups	2
Differences between natural and manmade groups	3
Kinds of natural groups	4
The family	4
The neighbor group	4
The community group	5
Rural and urban natural groups	5
Characteristics of natural groups	6
Religious beliefs	7
Customs and mores	7
Education	7
Traditional knowledge and practices	8
Civic issues	8
Recreation	8
Folk art	8
Economic life	9
Technology	9
Function of groups and needs of members	9
The way groups function	11
Meetings	11
The person-to-person process	11
Principles of leadership	12
Kinds of leaders	12
Titled leader	12
Natural leader	13
Neighbor group leader	13
Community leaders	14
Trade-area leaders	14
Overall countywide leaders	14
Professional leaders	16
How leaders function	16
Working with groups	17
Inducing change in groups	19
Locating groups and leaders	20
Manmade groups and leaders	21
Community leaders	21
Neighbor groups and leaders	22
Using the group method in districts	22
Analyzing the workload	23
How many groups	23

WORKING WITH PEOPLE
Some Principles and Methods
for
Soil Conservation Service Personnel

Soil conservationists need to know all they can about people and their leaders--how they think and act, how best to approach them, and how to get results by working with them. The following pages give some principles of group organization and behavior. Many of the principles are age old, well known and used by sociologists. Techniques and procedures for locating and working with groups and leaders, now widely used by the Soil Conservation Service, are outlined.

PEOPLE ARE NATURALLY INTERDEPENDENT

Since individuals are dependent on each other, they naturally group themselves for mutual aid and social life. Among rural people, you have seen countless examples of this kind of behavior--farmers talking to one another over the fence or on the street corner, gathering in a shady yard on Sunday afternoon, or helping to do the farmwork of sick neighbors.

Just as members of a family are dependent on each other, so neighboring families or friends frequently depend on each other for advice, certain recreation, exchange of labor, loan of equipment and machinery, and many other everyday needs. People also satisfy many human needs through the community which is a larger unit of local action than the small neighbor or friendship group. Communities, rural and urban, usually are interdependent as part of the larger secondary trade-area community, the region, and the Nation.

Man's natural inclination is to live and work with others. Group life seems to be based largely on the relative helplessness of the individual and the values and benefits derived from cooperation and mutual aid. As a baby, man is almost entirely dependent on others. He must learn all the human types of behavior. Most of them are not instinctive or inherent. The way he develops depends largely on the culture of the groups in which he participates.

Natural Groups

Early in life, man finds himself an integral part of the family group. In childhood he joins with other children in play groups. As he takes up his life's work, he usually develops a new family group and gradually begins associating with others who have common interests. Over the years these associations result in what might be termed a neighbor or friendship group. The neighbor group has characteristic ways of living, beliefs, and goals that have developed through fairly close relations between two or more families. It is a group for neighboring but does not necessarily require contiguous living or neighborhood identity.

Facilities to satisfy certain needs, such as public education, health, and recreation generally are not made available through neighbor group but through larger organizations such as the community.

The family, neighbor group, and community can be termed natural groups.

Manmade Groups

Man also looks to other forms of association to satisfy certain needs and desires. In various circumstances, he creates or joins civic, fraternal, educational, professional, labor, or other organizations. These are organized intentionally for specific purposes or objectives. They do not develop through natural processes, therefore they can be referred to as manmade groups.

You undoubtedly have worked with many manmade or artificial groups. No doubt you have found them helpful in informing people about the problems and benefits of soil and water conservation. Usually the members gained some knowledge about soil and water conservation and formed an opinion that soil and water conservation is a good thing. Some members of these groups own or control land. Many may influence friends or relatives who do. Most groups of this nature can take no direct action. They usually function best as an important medium through which you or others can inform people about the soil conservation program.

Differences Between Natural and Manmade Groups

Manmade Groups:

Are formally organized for specific purposes and come into being by deliberate, intentional processes.

Can be organized quickly and disappear once objectives are achieved.

Relations between members are usually abstract and impersonal.

Usually function only periodically.

Membership may change and is subject to many fluctuations.

Leaders are elected or appointed.

Leaders usually have titles and are easily identified.

Membership can be ascertained from the rolls of the organization.

Members are notified of meetings by card or letter or have a definite meeting date.

(Examples: Civic clubs, soil conservation districts, chambers of commerce, women's clubs, lodges, fraternities, labor and farm organizations.)

Natural Groups:

Are informal groups which come into being by natural processes as the result of the members' needs, attitudes, beliefs, customs, and mode of living.

Develop slowly and endure because they serve several basic needs of man.

Members are sympathetic and more friendly with one another.

Function constantly through natural processes.

Membership is usually quite stable, although a few may leave and others join.

Leaders are not elected or appointed.

Leaders emerge out of the social characteristics and needs of the group. Leaders do not have titles.

Membership can be determined only by consulting the leader or people in the group.

Members usually meet informally or are notified of formal meetings by the leaders or other members.

(Examples: Family, neighbor, community.)

KINDS OF NATURAL GROUPS

In soil and water conservation and flood prevention work the important natural groups are the family, neighbor group, and community.

The Family

The family is the most clear-cut and easily recognized natural group. It is important in soil conservation since in the final analysis, the planning, application, and maintenance of a sound soil and water conservation plan is dependent on the thinking, decisions, actions, and resources of the farmer or rancher and his family. In working with farmers or ranchers all of the family should be considered, for many times the wife or children exert considerable influence.

The Neighbor Group

The neighbor group is a group of families bound together by mutual likes, interests, and needs. They may not live on adjoining farms and ranches. In general, each family is influenced in some way by what the other families do. Consciously or unconsciously all depend on one another for the solutions to common problems. These families often visit with one another and help each other, particularly in time of sickness or distress. They borrow each other's farm and household items and sometimes exchange labor and own machinery together. They often have social and recreational activities such as parties, picnics, and fishing trips. Sometimes there are kinship ties. In some cases they are of the same nationality or racial origins and attend the same churches. The group is one in which no introductions are needed, one in which all the people look on each other as "just good neighbors."

Neighbor groups vary in size. Some have three or four families, others may include as many as 10 or 12. Since personal contacts characterize most functions of the neighbor group, they usually live within a reasonable distance of each other, although good roads and modern transportation make it possible for families living apart to be in the same neighbor group. Sometimes a family may live in the center of a closely knit neighbor group and not be a member.

In stabilized agricultural areas the neighbor group is a logical and natural one to work with on soil and water conservation activities. The fact that folks live, work, visit, and play together makes it easier to get them together. Once brought together, the folks discuss and participate in activities more freely than do

people who are not so well acquainted. Their common interests, needs, and ideas cause certain desires or pressures to develop within the neighbor group. Members usually conform or respond to the group desires and stimuli. In this way local people, acting as a group, often can do more to speed up the acceptance, understanding, and application of soil and water conservation and flood prevention than can individuals.

Soil conservation will become a reality when group sentiment develops against misuse of land, water, plant, and wildlife resources. The neighbor group is the real action group. It is here that group decisions are made and actions initiated.

The Community Group

The community includes a number of interdependent neighbor groups. It generally provides services not available in the neighbor group, such as educational, religious, health, recreational, marketing, storage, and trade facilities. Unlike those in the neighbor group, not all members of the community know each other. Communities vary in size. Within the larger trade-centered communities, small communities often exist around schools, churches, or within a short radius of villages and towns. Generally speaking, the community is considered to be a particular area inhabited by folks who think of themselves as belonging to this rather than some other area.

The community group functions differently than the neighbor group. While people in a community often work hard on projects of broad common interest, it is rare that any large percentage of them will turn out for community meetings. Thus you usually will find neighbor groups more effective than community groups to work with on soil and water conservation planning, application, and maintenance.

Community groups, however, can help considerably in developing community interest. Community-sponsored meetings, tours, and demonstrations can set the stage for more effective neighbor-group activities. Natural community leaders are opinion molders, and their understanding and support of the program are essential to inform the people of a community or watershed about soil and water conservation and flood prevention.

Rural and Urban Natural Groups

You will usually be concerned with natural groups in rural areas. However, these community-and neighbor-group processes do not differ fundamentally between the country to the city. In the city the

processes usually are more complex because of the diverse interests and activities of members of the groups. Farm-owning townspeople usually do not belong to rural neighbor groups. More often they belong to a natural group in town since their main interests and friends are there.

Part-time farmers working in town spend most of the daylight hours 5 or 6 days a week away from their farms with other part-time farmers and townspeople. Consequently, they usually form a natural group with these people and are not members of distinctly rural neighbor groups. This situation often exists in areas around larger towns and cities.

CHARACTERISTICS OF NATURAL GROUPS

Knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs, and characteristics acquired by man as a member of society are commonly called culture. It is the cement that binds the group together.

Natural groups have characteristic cultural patterns. Each group considers its way of living and believing to be right. Each has a characteristic "grain" of belief or value system. Certain common denominators by which the "grain" of the natural group may be described, analyzed, and understood are known as "cultural indexes." Among the cultural indexes are nationality or racial background, religion, customs, education, civic attitudes, recreational interests, art, and economic life.

You will find these cultural indexes helpful in analyzing and learning to "go with the grain" of natural groups. Not all of the cultural indexes named here are common to all natural groups but most natural groups will have a majority of them.

To some extent the cultural indexes also apply to manmade or formally organized groups because in time they may develop their own unwritten codes of conduct. Knowledge of other characteristics, not necessarily cultural, which will help you understand and work with a group include: Kinship ties, work-exchange habits, type of farming, length of residence, and geographical location.

Members of a group look upon each other as "ingroupers" and upon members of a different group--with somewhat different interests and ways of life--as "outgroupers." You, as a soil conservationist and an "outgroupers," will find it important to recognize, understand, and use some of the more important cultural indexes so you may be accepted and allowed to work with members of a group.

Religious Beliefs

Many religious beliefs and degrees of piety exist in the United States. Religion is a powerful influence in the lives of some people but has only minor importance to others. In some groups all the members go to the same church and have similar beliefs. In others a number of faiths may be represented or there may be rather passive religious interest and little "church going." Some individuals and certain groups may have "no use" for religion.

Religious feeling is common and often plays an unsuspected role in the development of group attitudes. Where religion is important in the lives of people, religious leaders usually have considerable influence with the group and its members.

Customs and Mores

Customs and mores are unwritten, accepted ways of living and doing things. They are habits of action common to the members of the group and are fairly well standardized with some degree of traditional sanction. The form of greeting another person, the manner of dress, eating habits, certain practices in farming, and the forms of courtship are familiar examples of customs. They often are small things to an outsider but important to a group member. The group often looks with distrust at anyone ignoring their customs.

When the conviction arises that certain customs are indispensable to the welfare of a group, that they are the only right ways, and that departure from them will involve calamity, they are called mores. Mores are supersacred customs considered so right that if anyone violates them he is considered a rank outsider. Sanctions are so strong that a group member may be ostracized should he fail to respect the group mores.

Customs and mores are the unwritten laws. In contrast are written laws, which are the formalized means of control enacted by manmade groups.

Education

Different groups place different values on education. Some respect educators, spend considerable money for educational purposes, pay teachers well, and strive to send their children to high school and college. Others feel that their children should be home working on the farm after a minimum of schooling. They often consider the professional agricultural worker as a "book farmer." This may be a part of the in-group's attitude toward you as an out-group.

The educational background of the group and the values they place on schooling often influence their activities in agricultural programs. So you will want to find out all you can about the value the group places on education.

Traditional Knowledge and Practices

Groups have activities and knowledge which have been passed down from one generation to another and are traditional. Many of the present-day farming methods have been passed down in this manner. You have heard the statement: "He was a good farmer. As a boy he could plow a straighter furrow than anyone in the county." Such traditional concepts often are contrary to conservation objectives. If you know and understand the traditional practices and knowledge of the group, you will be better prepared for its reactions to your ideas.

Civic Issues

Strong beliefs on civic matters often affect individual or group decisions. Such beliefs may center around local bond issues, school consolidations, highway and road developments, local or national politics, traffic laws, or administration of parks and recreational facilities. Such issues, when hotly contested, sometimes align people against each other and consequently influence their attitudes for years.

Some group members are tolerant of the convictions and affiliations of their fellow members and neighbors, especially when stronger ties bind the group together. Others are not.

By being aware of the civic beliefs and undercurrents of feeling of individuals and groups you work with, you can avoid offending them.

Recreation

Everyone feels the need for recreation but the ways people satisfy it vary considerably. In some groups, visiting is the most common recreation. Others like movies, the circus, dances, songfests, sports, picnics, and parties. Many individuals and some groups have hobbies. An understanding and appreciation of the accepted recreations often help the out-grouper to become accepted.

Folk Art

Folk art and recreation are closely associated. Some people adopt arts such as music, dancing, painting, and sewing as hobbies. Other people develop an appreciation for the arts and view with respect

those who engage in them. Expression of art among farmers may take another form: The appreciation of such things as fine herds and crops. Group members often look with respect on the farmer who raises fine horses, purebred cattle, or exceptional crops.

Economic Life

A man often engages in a certain type of farming because of the traditions, customs, and background of his group. His attitude towards money or material wealth is influenced by the group's value system. This has considerable influence on his effort to make farming a business and regulates to some degree his level of living.

You need to understand the values placed on wealth or economic prestige in dealing with a group and its leaders. Some people look with favor on the prosperous farmer, others with suspicion or resentment. Many groups consider the methods by which a man made his money as more important than how much he accumulated.

Technology

Groups vary widely in their development of technology. Some farm with mules, others with diesel-powered tractors. Some use a hoe to kill weeds, others use chemical sprays. Technology sometimes is closely tied up with tradition. You will want to start where the group is in its thinking and relate your program to it. Changes in technology, being of a material nature, usually occur more rapidly than do changes in customs and tradition.

Old ideologies or assumptions and customary habits of thought which may persist often fail to prepare people for the implications of the machine age. A group may be modern minded with regard to machines, tools, and scientific techniques but still cling to the traditional social patterns their forefathers used.

FUNCTION OF GROUPS AND NEEDS OF MEMBERS

Membership in a group satisfies certain needs and demands of the individual. In order to understand a group and predict its behavior under various conditions, we need to understand the needs and demands the group serves. To satisfy these needs, groups function primarily in the following ways:

- (1) Some groups meet the current needs of their dominant members because some members have more influence in making decisions than others. Consequently, the needs of less influential

members often are pushed into the background. When the leaders begin to recognize the needs of the less dominant members and associate them with their own, those needs tend to represent the current needs of the group.

- (2) Most groups have "major" and "accessory" functions. Groups come into being or are organized to satisfy certain specific needs. Later, most groups attempt to satisfy additional demands and needs of members. This is particularly true with manmade groups. For example, many non-religious activities, such as social events, Boy Scout activities, orchestras and bands, and dramatic, domestic-science, and gymnasium classes are carried on by certain churches. These activities represent a change in the basic functions of the religious organizations. Similarly, in natural groups "accessory" functions have developed. In the settlement of the West, many communities were started primarily for protection against hostile Indians. As they persisted, educational, religious, health, and many other functions came into being.

Rural neighbor groups, since they are small and informal, are particularly sensitive to the changing needs of members. Some of these groups originally came into being because of similarity of racial and religious backgrounds of members and the closeness of the membership. Out of this many "accessory" functions developed, such as card games, picnics, joint ownership and exchange of equipment, work exchange, and the exchange of improved agricultural skills and techniques. Many of these activities eventually became a major function. In a similar way, soil conservation may be developed from an "accessory" to a "major" function of neighbor groups.

- (3) Most groups serve to meet the "dominance" and "belongingness" needs of their members. Every group provides different roles for its members and permits each to display his particular capacities or talents. Most people need to belong to some group larger than their immediate family. This driving need is the underlying motive behind the "joining" activities so characteristic of American people.
- (4) Man's needs increase and develop as he associates with other members of his group. This interaction between members gives rise to many varied new group needs. Generally speaking, the more needs of its members a group can serve, the longer it will continue to exist and the stronger it will be.

The Way Groups Function

Group life is dependent on interaction between the members as a result of their association and communication. Groups discharge the functions and meet the needs previously described through two major processes: Meetings and person-to-person communication.

Meetings

Meetings may be formal ones called by the group leader or informal gatherings of the group at irregular intervals just to talk things over.

Formal meetings at regular times are characteristic of most manmade groups and enable them to achieve most of their objectives.

Natural groups have meetings when a crisis occurs or when the need for one is felt. Such situations do not arise often and meetings are less common to most natural groups. Meetings of neighbor groups usually are informal. Even in a crisis, as when a neighbor is sick, people just naturally assemble at his home without prior arrangement. These folks think in terms of a "get together" rather than a formal meeting.

The Person-To-Person Process

More information and influence are disseminated by casual discussion, observation, and example than by any other process. Everyone visits with his friends, watches his neighbors, and is influenced by what they do or say. Most people participate in this chain-like process continuously and willingly. The process is less operative in man-made groups because the members usually have fewer personal contacts with one another, less opportunity to observe each other, and more diversified business activities.

In natural groups, and especially in neighbor groups, the chain process is the group's natural way of getting information and passing it on. Neighbors casually meeting on the street or at the store, the housewife on the telephone, and farmers exchanging work or borrowing from one another are channels through which this "grapevine" works. The natural leader disseminates information and exerts influence on the group through this process. He feels the pulse of the group and learns of their reactions and wishes by the same means. It is a two-way process.

PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP

Characteristic of all groups is the leader-follower pattern. The interdependence of people results in interaction between one another and particularly between certain individuals. The most dependable individuals gradually emerge as leaders. A definite chain of influence and acceptance develops between the followers and the leader or leaders.

Leadership is the art of influencing people to cooperate willingly toward some goal which they have come to find desirable, or, as President Eisenhower has said, "The art of getting somebody else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."

Leadership is a process of mutual stimulation. The group stimulates the leader and the leader stimulates the group. This brings about the process of leader-follower relationship. Since people are naturally interdependent, they want someone to whom they can turn for help and guidance, someone whose judgment they value. This implies that leaders exemplify the ideals, value system, and modes of life of the group. Leadership thus emerges as a result of service rendered to the followers. Leadership is the property of the group which it bestows upon a person or persons. It is theirs to give and theirs to take away.

A real leader liberates energy in his followers. He gives them an opportunity to express themselves in a cause where they can develop their own initiative and powers. The real leader is generally a step ahead of the others; he has their confidence and they will follow. In contrast to the real leader, there are apparent leaders who will make promises concerning their group but may be unable to move it to action.

Leadership is essential for a group to function, and, like the hive which loses its queen bee, no group can exist long without it.

KINDS OF LEADERS

Just as there are different kinds of groups there are different kinds of leaders. For our purpose these can be defined in three categories: (1) Titled leaders, (2) natural leaders, and (3) professional leaders.

Titled Leader

The titled leader is associated with a manmade group. He has been elected or appointed and has a title. He may receive a salary for his services but many do not. Titled leaders usually serve a term of office and their leadership may be temporary. Sometimes the real leader is a member without title, whose judgment the group respects, even though they have elected another as the titled leader.

Individuals who aspire to become titled leaders often are aggressive and driven by desires for power and prestige. They usually possess more ability to plan and organize, have more initiative, vision, and enthusiasm, and are somewhat more intelligent than the average of the group.

Examples of titled leaders are officers of civic clubs and farm organizations, school board members, political office holders, and soil conservation district governing body members.

Very important titled leaders to soil conservationists are the members of district governing bodies. These governing bodies are authorized by law to enlist the active participation of all other leaders in the district along with all available resources. The district governing board may not be aware of all the assistance available to it through other leaders. By getting the active support of all leadership, the governing board can multiply by many times its own effort and that of SCS and other personnel assisting it.

Natural Leader

The natural leader is a nonappointed, nonelective, untitled leader of a natural group. In a natural group, leadership emerges from existing needs and personalities. The modes of living and believing, and the needs of division of labor within a group cause a pattern of leadership to develop. For example, where the group recognizes educational needs a strong educational leadership usually develops to promote that facility. The larger the group, the greater is the likelihood of a number of specialized leaders developing. Natural leadership seldom exceeds 2 to 4 percent of the total population.

Neighbor Group Leader

The natural neighbor group leader is the person whom the members have known for a long time, visit with, have confidence in, and whose judgment and advice they seek. The neighbor group leader is unselfish, interested in others, and gives time to his neighbors. When a neighbor is sick, the leader usually is first to visit him. He may not be the most aggressive individual. More often he is modest, unassuming, and not particularly strong in many of the leadership traits found in titled leaders. Often he is not conscious that he is the leader.

Because the followers often seek his advice, the leader usually can motivate the neighbor group to action. A nod of approval often is necessary from this "key" neighbor before the group will

accept a new program. The neighbor group leader is the one to contact for advice about working with the group. He can get the group together when he thinks it is advisable to hold a get-together.

Members of the group do not think of him as a leader unless he is both the "key" neighbor in the neighbor group and a community leader. Leadership in a neighbor group is slow in emerging but usually is long enduring. One word of caution: never directly refer to anyone as a neighbor leader. To do so may destroy his leadership. Most true leaders will resent being singled out from their group and to do so often may lose them their followers.

Community Leaders

Some well known civic-minded people become leaders in their communities. They are the opinion molders, and their influence is important in any community activity. A program is likely to succeed only with their backing or understanding. Without their support progress will be slow.

Trade-Area Leaders

Trade-area leaders are the few people found in trade-area centers who are sought by landowners and operators for their opinions and advice. Often they are bankers, co-op managers, seed or fertilizer dealers, farm equipment dealers, hardware dealers, and the like. Their scope of influence usually extends to the edge of the trade area. In farming or ranching territory, the trade area may vary from small to large and may extend over more than one soil conservation district.

A few leaders usually have influence throughout the county. In a county-wide district, they also are district-wide leaders. Members of soil conservation district governing boards often fit into this category in addition to being titled leaders.

Overall County-wide Leaders

Leaders have leaders. Neighbor group leaders usually look to some community or overall leader for guidance. This relationship can be learned from visits with the neighbor group leader and listening to what he tells you. Again you can save time and effort by encouraging community and overall leaders to help. They can function best by informing and helping neighbor group leaders form opinions about soil and water conservation, watershed programs, and other broad phases of conservation.

The community leader's greatest influence is exerted through personal contacts with the neighbor group leader. His nod of approval may carry a great deal of weight. If he owns a farm and has a good soil conservation plan in effect, he can invite other leaders to view what he has done. He may also help spread the gospel of soil conservation by expressing his views at community meetings and appearing on radio or television programs. With his permission, you may find it helpful to occasionally quote him in the newspapers. He can also arrange for and participate in community-wide meetings, field days, tours, and demonstrations.

Overall leaders, including the titled leaders of organizations in the district, can be helpful in molding general public as well as farmer or rancher opinion. They usually have considerable influence on community and neighbor group leaders.

In their personal contacts overall leaders can do much to convince other leaders of the values of soil and water conservation. Where these overall leaders are also titled leaders of organizations, they can influence the membership by discussing soil and water conservation at meetings, and oftentimes can persuade the organization to adopt soil and water conservation as one of its activities.

You can work with the community, trade-area, and overall leaders to advantage, particularly in moving the neighbor group leaders to action. But before your work with them can be effective you must learn who they are and how interested they are in soil and water conservation. Then you must give them facts about the benefits of soil and water conservation, particularly what the soil conservation district program can mean to their community, watershed, or county, as well as to them personally. Here again you will want to capitalize on their interests. Many of the principles of working with the neighbor group leader can be used to advantage in your work with community, trade-area, and overall leaders.

It is desirable that you know the leadership pattern in watersheds and work with the leaders. This includes neighbor group leaders, community leaders, trade-area leaders, and overall leaders. The latter three types of leaders are opinion molders, and their understanding of the soil and water conservation program in watersheds is necessary if a coordinated program is to be effectively and efficiently planned and carried out.

In your work with soil conservation districts, you have no doubt recognized the importance of helping district governing bodies understand their job and have urged them to accept and discharge their responsibilities. It may be desirable to follow the same course in your work with natural groups and leaders in order to achieve the desired results.

Most of your work with these leaders will be in the nature of personal visits although often you will reach many of them through meetings of the various organizations at which you appear. When you have names of the community, trade-area, and overall leaders, the list may well be discussed with the district governing body and plans made to actively enlist the leaders' cooperation in the district program. Care should be used that work is not initiated with more leaders at any one time than can be adequately serviced with the help available in the district.

Professional Leaders

Examples of professional leaders are employed specialists such as school teachers, clergymen, social workers, county agents, soil conservationists, vocational agricultural teachers, and Farmers Home Administration supervisors. They are paid to render specialized services for which they have been trained. One function of the professional leader is to educate, train, and stimulate people to the desired action. He must be accepted personally and professionally by groups and their leaders if he is to be effective.

HOW LEADERS FUNCTION

The leader is important to the morale of his group. By virtue of his special position within the group he is its focal point in respect to goals, ideals, and activities. So all leaders must perform, to some degree, certain functions. These vary in degree and intensity with the group.

In manmade groups, leaders function in a rather formal way. They are elected or appointed to perform certain functions defined in written rules or bylaws. These functions usually involve the leader as the group executive, adviser, planner, educator, spokesman, harmonizer, representative, or a combination of several of these responsibilities. His reelection or reappointment often depends on how well and how tactfully he discharges these functions. Similarly, professional leaders must perform many of these functions skillfully to merit the approval of their coworkers and colleagues.

Natural leaders generally function in a much more informal manner, particularly the natural neighbor group leaders. Oftentimes neither the neighbor leader nor the group membership recognizes the functions outlined in the previous paragraph. However, those functions may be discharged indirectly and rather quietly by the neighbor leader in the course of everyday activities. He often gives guidance and

advice to neighbors when they talk with him. While not always the first one to accept new ideas, he usually is watched and followed by the other members of the group when he does so.

Because he serves as the group example and to a degree as educator, the neighbor group leader may decline to adopt new practices immediately. He may not wish to put others under compulsion to follow his example or to bear the consequences of possible failure. As a general rule, other members of the group do not take on new ideas until the leader has said whether the idea is worthwhile.

When crises arise, the neighbor group leader usually acts promptly and can get the group together on short notice. He can speak for the group and to the group. Through him, you can give ideas and knowledge to the members. Likewise, the leader can tell the out-grouper of the group's problems and needs.

WORKING WITH GROUPS

Discussion on previous pages has shown that group life results in situations where people respond to one another and modify one another's behavior. Everywhere there is leading, following, teaching, imitating, praising, sometimes intimidating, blaming, and ostracizing. These forms of collective behavior operate to a greater extent in natural groups than in manmade ones and are particularly potent forces in neighbor groups.

The main objective of your work in soil and water conservation is to influence the people who control and operate land to become conservationists. You want them to develop and apply sound, coordinated conservation plans to farms or ranches and watersheds. Permanent accomplishments can be expected only to the degree that soil and water conservation becomes part of the pattern of conduct of groups of people, especially the neighbor groups. When neighbors "think conservation," then soil and water conservation becomes the traditional way of life. It becomes a "major function" of the group. Because of this mutual stimulation on the part of the neighbors, working with neighbor groups offers many advantages over working separately with each individual as he requests assistance.

You may think more progress can be made if you help each individual as soon as he makes application. Perhaps it can, over a short period of time. But unless this individual is an outcast he reflects to some degree the needs, desires, and wants of a group. If you rush right in with assistance you may have satisfied him personally. But you have not taken advantage of the stimulation the group can provide nor have you reckoned with the demands that other individuals in the group may make on you at some later date.

Assuming that the same general information and "know how" needs to be given to all the farmers or ranchers, it certainly is easier, more efficient, and more effective to relate or demonstrate the necessary principles to a group than to each individual.

Many activities in planning, application, and maintenance of soil conservation can be carried on effectively with groups. For example, block soil surveys can be made more efficiently of a group of neighboring farms than on scattered individual farms. Get-togethers of the group prior to planning will enable each farmer or rancher to make his own decisions wisely and more rapidly when planning assistance is given to him on his farm or ranch. Demonstrations and "conservation bees" at which neighbors help one another apply soil conservation measures can be used effectively to stimulate the application and maintenance of practices comprising farm or ranch conservation plans.

The neighbor group approach has other benefits. When you know who the people in the neighbor group are, how far along they are in their conservation thinking, and what they as a group are interested in doing next, you can better schedule your time. Likewise you need to better organize your subject matter and activities, for you must be better prepared to work successfully with a group than with an individual. You also have more help, because you can place more responsibility on the group and the leader.

The advantages of working with natural groups and their leaders can be summed up with this statement: What you as a professional soil conservationist can do by working with individuals is small compared with what you can do by working with leaders and groups of people.

Success in working with groups, however, will be achieved only if the activities undertaken are of a kind that people are accustomed to doing in groups. Some activities must be carried out with individuals. To get maximum efficiency it is important that SCS operations be geared to both the group and individual approach--employing whichever is most effective under the circumstances. In many cases a combination of the group and individual approach will be the most effective.

The group approach is suitable for consideration of the following subjects:

- (1) The general principles of soil and water conservation.
- (2) How soil conservation districts operate.
- (3) What a conservation plan is and how it is developed.
- (4) The farmer's or rancher's part in planning and applying a conservation program.

- (5) Types of financial assistance available in helping land owners and operators apply conservation programs.
- (6) Soil and land-capability information.
- (7) Site and condition of native vegetation.
- (8) Range use and production determinations.
- (9) Watershed programs.
- (10) General principles of Great Plains Program.
- (11) Followup on the easier applied practices.
- (12) Evaluation of cost-returns on many conservation practices.
- (13) Water development, use, and disposal.

Inducing Change in Groups

The major effect of group life is to bring about a definite pattern of some aspects of human behavior. The group adopts certain procedures and develops sentiments and beliefs. These beliefs and sentiments stabilize the group by encouraging uniformity in attitudes and practices. These established or traditional beliefs and sentiments often stand in the way of effective and intelligent action or change.

For that reason, you normally may expect some lack of understanding from many groups with whom you deal. Some broad general principles of procedure have been advanced ^{1/} that can be used to prevent or decrease the resistance to change.

A basic principle is that acceptance of new ideas will be speeded up to the degree that you help the group members develop their own understanding of their problems and the need for the change. To do this, you must be aware of how they feel about it and what they can do about those feelings. This implies the following course of action:

- (1) Learn what the nature of the resistance is.
- (2) Encourage the group to express its resistance and try to analyze why the group reacts as it does.
- (3) Permit communication to go in both directions, from you to the group and its leader, and from the leader and group to you.

^{1/} Zander, A. The Problem of Resistance in Creating Social Change. Univ. Mich. Res. Center for Group Dynamics. (Paper presented at meetings of the Amer. Soc. for Pub. Admin., Wash., D.C., March 11, 1949).

- (4) Allow the group members to air their opinions. There is good evidence that new attitudes will be accepted by people only if they have had this opportunity "to blow off steam."
- (5) Let the group gather the facts. Resistance will be less likely to develop or persist if facts which point to the need for change are gathered by the persons who must make the change, or by those who will be most influenced by it. People will be more likely to act on information they gather themselves than on that gathered by out-groupers.
- (6) Give the individuals a chance to make a true group decision. Resistance is less likely to occur if the group participates in deciding how the change should be made, what the change should be, what the effect of the change will be, or any other problems that they can help solve.
- (7) Consider the group's ways of thinking and believing and "go with the grain."

LOCATING GROUPS AND LEADERS

General principles of how natural groups and leaders function and reasons for working with them have been reviewed in previous sections.

Many successful agricultural workers have put some of these principles to good use, often without being conscious of doing so. After working successfully with certain groups, they tried to analyze what they did. Usually they found their success was because they had gained the support, confidence, and advice of the right person or persons in the group. How to find the right person and the right group without using time-consuming "trial and error" methods each time remained a problem.

In recent years the Soil Conservation Service has reexamined some of these already-known sociological principles and adapted them to working with people on soil and water conservation. Locating neighbor groups and leaders by interviewing a cross section of the neighbors, however, was frustrating and time-consuming to many of the SCS personnel. As a result of this experience, an easier, quicker, and more satisfactory method of locating them has evolved.

You will find it helpful to set down on paper what you and other Service personnel already know about various groups and leaders in the work unit. For natural leaders this might include:

- (1) Names of communities and known community leaders.
- (2) Names of known neighbor group leaders by communities.

(3) Names of trade-area leaders.

(4) Names of overall and countywide leaders or soil conservation district leaders.

For important manmade or formally organized groups, list the name of the organization and its elected or appointed officers. Information about its leaders other than the officers can be obtained by observing the group in action or talking to the members. The list of groups and leaders should be kept current, adding new names and dropping those that become inactive. District governing bodies can help maintain such a record.

Drawing the boundaries of the various communities on a base map of a county helps find natural leadership. A community leader's influence usually is tied to a definite geographical area. Neighbor groups occupy only parts of a community, and a neighbor group leader's influence is limited to the families in his group.

County maps showing community boundaries often are available. In many States a copy may be obtained from the Rural Sociology Department of the State College or University. Sometimes county agents or county officials have a copy.

If a map is not available, you can make one over a period of time with help from community leaders, businessmen at the trade center or crossroads store, or county or district leaders. Where people trade or obtain various services usually indicates the general boundaries of a community.

Manmade Groups and Leaders

Manmade groups and leaders are easy to locate. These groups usually have formal names, and by asking questions, the identity and purposes of these organizations can be learned. These groups usually have lists from which you can obtain the names of members and elected officers. By inquiry, much can be learned about the natural leaders and the group's purposes, functions, and activities. The names of these groups and their leaders should be written down as they are found.

Community Leaders

Community leaders are prominent, well-known, civic-minded people who have the interest of their community at heart. They know they are leaders, and the people recognize them as such.

To determine the real natural leaders of a community you may start by consulting with the soil conservation district governing body. Obtain from them the names of the one, two, or three people they consider to have the most influence in their respective communities. Then ask other countywide or districtwide leaders. Generally, county office holders know community leaders and will be able to help you. Lifelong residents of the county, bankers, newspaper editors, farm machinery and equipment dealers, elevator operators, cattle or produce buyers, storekeepers, ministers, and priests can help you determine who they are. List community leaders that are known.

Neighbor Groups and Leaders

One of the techniques of locating neighbor groups and leaders used successfully by many conservationists of the Soil Conservation Service follows:

- (1) Arrange for an interview with a known community leader.
- (2) Place before him a map on which communities have been delineated for easy reference. Point out directions and roads to orient him.
- (3) Check the boundaries of his community with him. Make alterations if necessary. Talk with him about how rural people naturally group themselves into neighbor groups. Start at one end of the community and get him to name families in the group. Keep notations as he gives you the information. Secure from him the name of the "key" neighbor after describing his characteristics. Continue until all groups in the community have been covered.

USING THE GROUP METHOD IN DISTRICTS

A very important group of overall leaders is the governing body of the soil conservation district. You undoubtedly will find that when the district governing body knows the principles involved and thoroughly understands the procedure of locating natural groups it will adopt a policy of working with such groups when it is expedient to do so.

After you have learned the procedure of locating natural groups and their leaders you will want to discuss the subject with the district governing body. Some conservationists have found it effective to lay a little groundwork by talking to each member and explaining the principles involved and the process used in locating neighbor groups

and leaders. Then the matter is thoroughly discussed at a formal meeting of the district governing body. At this time assistance from other professional workers may be invited.

People usually do not understand the possibilities of working with neighbor groups and leaders until they have gone through the process. You will find this true of most district governing bodies. Once they discuss the matter in their meeting and then go through the process successfully in neighbor groups they are likely to say, "Brother, I know it works. I was there. I saw it."

Analyzing the Workload

The biggest stumbling block in getting the district governing body to accept the idea of natural group work usually has been the backlog of individual applications for assistance, especially in older districts. A feeling of obligation to give these applicants assistance first and a feeling that neighbor group action will cause the backlog to increase are problems you may have to face. You can help the governing body solve it by going through an analysis and suggesting a course of action such as the following:

Point out instances where these applications for help are not bona fide. Many individuals are interested only in a single practice, and soil conservationists in the past have spent much time trying to sell them on a basic farm or ranch conservation plan. Then suggest a means of working with these people in groups.

How Many Groups

The number of groups to work with depends on the situation in the work unit. The workload should be analyzed on the basis of work that can be done best with groups and work that should be done best with individuals. Some topics can be discussed as effectively or more so with groups than with individuals. Such discussions save time. On the other hand, there are on-the-farm or ranch jobs that must be accomplished with individuals. For example, preplanning activities can be handled with a group. However, assistance to landowners and operators in planning their own soil and water conservation programs must be done with the individual. Many kinds of demonstrations can be held with groups; layout assistance in drainage must be on the farm or ranch.

One would not likely meet jointly with 400 land owners and operators in a watershed, but one could meet with a group of 10 or 12 community leaders and 40 or 50 neighbor group leaders in a joint session to get their ideas on planning or other phases of the watershed program. Likewise, it would be possible to meet with small groups of land owners in the watershed where the natural leader called his group together.

Groups should be limited to the number to which appropriate follow-up assistance can be given. Since all work cannot be done with groups, work only with groups when that makes it possible to provide better service to farmers and ranchers. Working with leaders and groups is only a "tool" for getting conservation on the land and not a cure-all for all problems. The principles are sound and have been proved over and over by successful soil conservationists and other professional agricultural workers. Working with leaders, or leaders and groups, permits you to present factual information about soil and water conservation ahead of the day when either individual or group decisions must be made. It paves the way for more intelligent and rapid decision and action later.

